MMR_0666 Larry Swigert

Larry and his layout today

He, like most, if not all of us, became captivated by railroading as a young child. At the age of six he rode on a steam locomotive engineer's lap and was the envy of all his cousins as he chugged into the station. He was born is Bartlesville, Oklahoma in the early 40's but grew up near the train station in Enid where his grandfather worked for the railroad.

Larry has a superbly detailed layout in a spare room in his home. He produces excellent models, many of which have earned him First Place recognition at Regional Conventions.

First place caboose

This caboose, which was part of his logging train, won First Place in a previous year as a single entry and the complete train won Favorite Train of the Convention this past June. In 2011 and 2012, his Great Circus Train won Favorite Train as well.

Now that you know a little more about Larry, we can move on to his recruiting success. Judging from his 2013 record, maybe membership in the NMRA can be increased. I think we can all agree that the hobby will benefit from more members, thereby increasing funds to continue the work of setting standards, providing research material and historical data, all of which enriches our modeling.

Final touches

Speaking strictly from my experience as a lone wolf/ armchair model railroader for years, I was first drawn into the NMRA after seeing a flyer placed at my local hobby shop by Larry announcing the time and location of the next Division meeting. He had convinced the hobby shop owner that this would help his business. He also convinced him that providing discount coupons would more than pay for the cost of the coupon. I have won probably $50 worth of these coupons myself over the years, and spent 10 or 20 times that much while redeeming them. He nailed it --- everyone wins --- with hobby shop discounts!

Larry's weathering techniques

At the Division meeting, a game show attraction (the kids and adults love this one) called Deal or Dud is used to award the discount coupons. Raffle tickets are presented to everyone attending and are used as a chance to win the big prize of a $25 off discount coupon in one of the numbered 1 through 5 boxes. The others boxes contain $15, $10, $5 discounts and then, the dreaded box of Milk Duds! Even with Milk Duds, you can't lose. Larry's game show provides some

Circus train models

Soooo, that's where you have been hiding!

Favorite Train at the Convention award

laughter, applause and helps keep the younger crowd (those under 60) — entertained.

He likes to quote Gil Freitag by saying that "it is not about trains, it's about people!" One of Larry's talents is listening to people. By asking the right questions and listening carefully to the answers, one can find out what is important to an individual. Again, using myself as an example, Larry on more than one occasion mentioned that I was a photographer, which had nothing to do with trains but eventually gave me an idea of using my expertize to photograph model railroads.

Larry knows that to draw in members, the current members must be fed and watered regularly. By that I mean, he interjects into the meeting on a regular basis, kudos here and there recognizing an accomplishment or personal story about an individual whose name or model has come up. After one of my 'Round Town with Roy' PowerPoint presentations where I show slides of different layouts I have photographed, Larry took the podium to state that I had driven many miles to visit these layouts and VOLUNTEERED to do these presentations. He then asked the question, "How many volunteer points have you earned from these presentations?" He not only recognized my effort, but planted the idea in others that they too can earn volunteer points toward that Achievement Award.

When he needed volunteers to help with the NMRA booth at the various train shows in town, he knew he could call on me and the others in the division who wanted volunteer points to step forward and help out. I am proud to say I just completed the requirements for the Volunteer AP this month largely because of Larry's guidance.

Probably the most important point to convey is that Larry places the NMRA Achievement Program (AP) at the forefront at every opportunity. AP Awards are a main feature of the monthly Division meeting. This creates the enthusiasm that new members see in the current members, which in turn creates enthusiasm in new members – it keeps everyone coming back each month. It is a synergistic phenomenon, but it needs the catalyst that Larry provides by constantly recognizing achievement.